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SUBJECT: GOT'S IRAQ ENVOY CONTINUES OUTREACH TO SUNNIS AND
NEIGHBORS, SAYS WILLING TO MEET WITH PUK/KDP

REF: ANKARA 6671 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkey is continuing its efforts to bring Sunni Arabs into the Iraqi political process, GOT Special Envoy Celikkol told us Dec. 19. Celikkol insisted Turkey was powerless to prevent rejectionist Sunnis from meeting in Istanbul last week. Officials in Jordan and the UAE are worried about Iranian influence in the region, he asserted. Turkey still believes a "neighbors plus P-5" conference would be constructive in isolating Tehran. Celikkol regretted Turkey's poor relations with the Iraqi Kurds, but said the Kurds must first take "some steps" on Kirkuk and PKK. Celikkol looks forward to traveling to Washington in January for consultations. End summary.

¶2. (C) DCM called on GOT Special Envoy for Iraq Celikkol Dec. ¶19. Celikkol reported that the Iraqi Ambassador to Ankara had officially protested the Global Anti-Aggression Campaign's Dec. 13-14 conference in Istanbul (reftel). He insisted that the GOT was powerless to stop the conference from proceeding and did not itself participate or support it, and emphasized that the MFA had issued a strong public statement of support for the Maliki government as part of its response. He claimed that the GOT had done due diligence to ensure that the participants were not subject to arrest warrants. (He said he understood that Association of Muslim Scholars leader Harith al-Dhari's arrest warrant had been withdrawn by the GOI.)

¶3. (S) Celikkol traveled to Istanbul following the conference, where he met with al-Dhari, Sunni Arab politician Adnan Dulaimi, representatives of a religious Turkoman party, and other Sunnis with "some connections to the insurgency." He underscored that he urged al-Dhari to hold direct talks with the U.S., and he stressed the need for all parties to renounce violence and work within the Iraqi political system. Celikkol said the Sunnis gave him pretty much the same message: Iran is dominating Iraq at the expense of the Sunnis, and the U.S. is allowing this to happen and may even favor this. Celikkol told us that he pushed back hard on this ill-conceived notion. He emphasized that if the Sunnis view the situation in Iraq as a sectarian civil war and not a war against U.S. occupation, the Sunnis should reconsider

their negative view of us and seek our support against Iranian misdeeds. According to Celikkol, Al-Dhari and Dulaimi are not as extreme as Salih Mutlaq: they do not favor the overthrow of the Maliki government, though they do want the Interior and Defense Ministers replaced with "respected figures" (NFI).

¶4. (S) Celikkol briefed on his recent visits to the UAE, Jordan, and Syria. UAE officials are consumed with basically one issue: Iran. The UAE views Iran as a growing threat to the entire gulf. Celikkol told us he also met in Abu Dhabi with Sunnis who may have ties to the insurgency, sending them essentially the same message he did to the groups in Istanbul.

¶5. (C) Like the UAE, Jordan is very concerned with Iranian influence in Iraq, but also worried about bilateral problems with Syria, Celikkol said. The Jordanians favor a regional diplomatic initiative to deal with Iraq, perhaps starting slowly with Turkey-Jordan discussions, then to expand to include other Arab states.

¶6. (C) Celikkol said he pressed the Syrians "very hard" on border control and reconciliation issues. Turkey shares the UK's assessment that Syria is already being more cooperative on Iraq issues, and that it was a positive sign that Assad refused to travel to Tehran for a trilateral summit with Talabani and Ahmedinejad.

¶7. (C) Celikkol pressed for us to support an international (neighbors plus P-5) conference on Iraq. He said that Turkey and the Arab states would work hard to isolate Tehran and bring Damascus into further cooperation. Celikkol believed

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that Iran and Syria might push for a timetable for U.S. withdrawal, but Turkey and others would demand that any such timetable be based on conditions in Iraq, not strictly on timing. DCM pushed back, asking what such a conference might accomplish in terms of specific, concrete steps that Iran and Syria might take.

¶8. (C) DCM noted that the KDP and PUK were apparently planning to send a joint delegation to Turkey, and pressed the GOT to receive it. Celikkol responded that Turkey has provided training to all political parties in Turkey, including the PUK and KDP, and that meeting with Iraqi Kurds in their party (as opposed to KRG) capacity was generally not problematic. He added that for example he meets periodically with Barzani's KDP foreign policy advisor (and former KDP rep in Ankara) Safeen Dizayee.

¶9. (C) However, Celikkol then went on to lament the poor state of relations between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds. He reported that both Nechirvan and Masoud Barzani had offered to visit Turkey within the past months, but said Turkey must see "some steps" by the Kurds on the Kirkuk and PKK issues beforehand. He believed a senior Kurdish visit now would raise expectations on these issues that the Turks assess cannot be met. Celikkol added that Iraqi Christians, Arabs, and "tribes" are all upset by Kurdish designs on Kirkuk. He described the Article 140 commission as not functional, and asserted that Kurdish demands for a referendum by the end of 2007 are "poisoning the relationship." Kurdish annexation of Kirkuk, Celikkol claimed, will be the beginning of the disintegration of Iraq.

¶10. (C) Celikkol said he wanted to travel to the U.S. soon for consultations with S/I Satterfield, NEA, NSC, and others. He is ready to travel any time after the Sacrifice Holiday (which ends Jan. 3). He added that he will also travel to Tehran, likely also in January.

¶11. (C) Comment: We pushed hard to get Celikkol to agree to accept a PUK-KDP delegation, but it is clear that the Turks' relations with the Iraqi Kurds are at a lower point. Should such an offer materialize officially, the GOT may seek to

duck it. End comment.

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